

# Steal This Hook!

## Mysterious Disappearances

By Doug Beyer



Welcome to "Steal This Hook!," a new column of **Eberron** adventure hooks. Every other week this column will bring you, the DM, a bevy of Eberron ideas to steal for your campaign. Think of yourself as a picky, bib-wearing, hungry monarch and "Steal This Hook!" as platter after steaming platter heaped high with juicy delights. Grab whatever looks appetizing, your majesty, and toss the rest to the dogs! (You know, because there're always dogs.) You'll find several entrée-sized hooks and then a bevy of bite-sized mini-hooks in each installment.

Each "Steal This Hook!" column will have a topic that ties the hooks together -- kind of an *Iron Chef*-style theme ingredient that flavors all the ideas. The themes will vary from straightforward fantasy motifs to ludicrously bizarre Eberron headtrips. Our first theme? "Mysterious disappearances." So glad you asked!

### The Case of the Locked Vault

A House Tharashk bounty hunter hires the heroes to investigate a rash of thefts from their private stores of Eberron dragonshards and other treasures. The treasures are kept sealed in a windowless stone vault behind an impressively warded iron door, and the vault is guarded day and night. The thefts have happened every night. The guards swear they didn't open the door or even see anyone -- the loot just mysteriously disappeared. Is a mystically skilled thief using *teleport* to enter and exit the vault? Could an ambitious ethereal filcher be coming back each night? Might someone have dug a tunnel under the vault? Or are the "thefts" a ruse to distract from the real crime -- many of the treasures are illusionary, and are disappearing as their spell durations end? The heroes need to bring their forensic skills to bear to solve this mystery.



### Runaway in the Reaches

A farming family near the edge of the Eldeen Reaches' Towering Wood sends a call for adventurers to find their missing daughter. The girl was last seen three days ago, when she disappeared along with a heavy wool cloak, an antique shield, and two weeks' rations. Investigation may reveal that she had been receiving letters in the Sylvan tongue -- was she wooed by a charming satyr? Invited to join an unknown sect of Eldeen moon-worshippers? Or was she kidnapped by mischievous fey, who also stole the supplies to confuse the issue? Is her family covering a dark secret -- that they sold their daughter to evil druids in exchange for a bountiful harvest? The heroes must locate the girl, and time may be of the essence.

### The Eyestalks Have It

A kalashtar scholar was away at a conference when his collection of preserved beholder eyestalks was stolen. When the heroes come to investigate, the first thing they discover is that the scholar is obsessed with the crime: he follows the PCs wherever possible and uses psionics to "eavesdrop" on the investigation when he can't personally be on the scene. Furthermore, the crime scene is perplexing -- the scholar's front door was apparently *chewed* open by something with powerful jaws, and his wood floors are gouged with claw-marks, yet the wards and locks on the glass display cases were carefully dispelled and disabled. Who would have taken the eyestalk collection? A purist sect of the Church of the Silver Flame persecuting the man for his kalashtar heritage? A mad artificer (with iron defenders) interested in the eyestalks as wands or as components for some bizarre, eldritch machine? A summoner (with a bound rast at her side) needing odd gifts for her hungry, conjured demons? Some poor, blind monster that believes the beholder eyes might grant it sight? An actual beholder and its servants that wants to end the kalashtar's abominable collecting?

## The Missing Mummy

When the Historical Museum of Sharn's exhibit, "Ancient Rulers of Galifar," opens to the public, the most anticipated item on display is the recently-discovered sarcophagus of Bruudash the Third, a centuries-old Galifar lord. The docent of the exhibit throws open the sarcophagus to reveal Bruudash's mummified body, but besides the musk of embalming spice, it's empty. Did the local rich aficionado hire thugs for "grand theft mummy" to add to his private collection? Has a curse somehow shriveled the mummy to dust? Perhaps worst of all, did Bruudash walk out of his box of his own accord, bent on punishing the living for his centuries-long dirt nap?

## One Carload Short of a Lightning Rail

The lightning rail train from Wroat arrives in Sharn -- *missing a car*. The train's conductor and security personnel explain, in half-shock, that while the train passed through some heavy fog, the private sleeping car simply vanished, leaving the train severed in two. They stopped the engine, reconnected the train, and continued on, hoping to get help in Sharn. What force could have snatched a car from a moving train? Was it *disintegrated* or *teleported*? Was the rest of the train somehow frozen in time (by a mass *sleep* spell, or even *time stop*), allowing the culprit(s) several undisturbed minutes in which to spirit away the car? Or was it snatched by a roc in the fog? A wrinkle: When the train left Wroat, the missing car carried the famous Brelish Last War veteran Forv Yannar, who was to speak at a rally in Sharn. Were Yannar's enemies intent on stopping that speech? Did Yannar himself stage his disappearance to get attention or to avoid assassins? Was he traveling with a valuable cache of Last War weapons? Finally, where is the train car and its passengers or cargo now?

## Mini-Hooks

Still hungry for more adventure hooks? Here are a few bite-sized ideas to chew on.

- The Library of Korranberg hires the adventurers to locate certain crucial maps from a Last War refugee's journal that went missing during a bizarre raid by savage halflings.
- A dragonmark heir contacts the PCs to interview her family members when their dragonmarks begin disappearing.
- A living *mass invisibility* spell somehow gets transported to a crowded market and causes havoc when people and objects begin vanishing at random.
- A Cyran expatriate hires the heroes to explore the ruins of her hometown in what is now the Mournlands, but now only a misty lake remains where the town used to be.

- An important Karnathi official goes missing but reappears just before a crucial vote involving policies on changeling rights; the heroes are hired to investigate what happened.
- A warforged thespian takes a break between scenes of a high-profile play and is never seen again.
- An Old Galifar-era village once thought lost to time reappears on a misty night during the conjunction of four planes -- and may vanish again when the conjunction ends.
- An *arcane marked* letter of credit from a House Kundarak bank in the Mror Holds must reach Korth, Karnath, in two weeks' time, but witnesses at a small inn along the way say that the courier vanished, leaving his traveling equipment in his room.
- The stone gargoyle decorations on Queen ir'Wynarn's castle in Aundair have gone missing overnight; royal scions hire adventurers to aid in their recovery.
- Morgrave University loses contact with their team of archaeologists on a dig in Q'Barra. Coincidentally, a cell of Dreaming Dark spies and assassins have taken up residence in the vine-covered ruins the scientists were uncovering.
- A pair of wererat criminals are captured but they vanish from their locked coach during their transfer to Dreadhold.

**Editor's Note:** For those of you lucky enough to be too young to remember 1970, that was the year Abbie Hoffman (Google him -- yes, him) published a book called *Steal This Book*. It had nothing to do with **D&D** or **Eberron**, but in the spirit of anarchy, we decided to hijack his title for our series anyway. Abbie would approve.

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## About the Author

Doug Beyer spent a lot of time getting philosophy degrees until he figured out that he should just move to Seattle and become a web developer for Wizards of the Coast. Now he spends his days working on games and his evenings playing them. Doug uses the time normally allotted for sleeping to lurk on the Wizards.com message boards as his alter ego, WotC\_Doog.

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